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FROM THE OPERATORS of the INDEPENDENCE LIMITED! Round trip Roanoke, Virginia to Mullens, West Virginia, Saturday November 3, 1973. Round trip Roanoke, Virginia to Meherrin, Virginia, Sunday November 4, 1973. Both trains powered by former Vgn. "Trainmaster" locomotives. Special package includes connection with Southern at Lynchburg and two nights at Hotel Roanoke. Write RNRH, P.O. Box 681, Roanoke, Virginia 24004 for details.

FREE PACKAGE OF TWENTY MIDWESTERN TIMETABLES, all post-1968 and pre-AMTRAK (some last railroad issues) with a $6.00 Regular Membership in the Twentieth Century Railroad Club. You also get a subscription to The Fast Mail (our monthly passenger train newsletter), the chance to attend meetings held in the Chicago area, and a discount on club-sponsored activities. Send check to: The Twentieth Century Railroad Club, 10700 S. Seeley Avenue, Chicago, IL 60643.

New to the Bay Area? So are we...The GOLDEN GATE DIVISION of THE RAILROAD ENTHUSIASTS, INC...with the Lark (our newsletter), and meetings held on the fourth Friday of each month in the Franciscan Room (9th Floor) of Bayview Federal Savings, 22nd and Mission Streets, San Francisco. Call or write Bob Shoring (415) 928-8410 P. O. Box 6745, San Francisco, California 94101.

SPOKANE PORTLAND & SEATTLE Technical Society quarterly newsletter contains information for all persons interested in the SP&S. Areas of the newsletter include History, motive power, equipment, modeling the SP&S, equipment diagrams, current info on former SP&S line and equipment, passenger operation and equipment. $4.00 yearly. SP&S Technical Society, 95 Smull Avenue, West Caldwell, NJ 07006.

SICK AND TIRED OF WHAT HAPPENS ON YOUR AMTRAK TRIP? Then write Amtrak and give them full details! In my earlier ad I gave the wrong person and I apologize for this mistake. The correct address is: Mr. Harold Graham, Consumer Affairs, AMTRAK, 955 L'Enfant Plaza North, SW, Washington, DC 20024. THANKS AGAIN!

TIMETABLE BARGAINS!! PUBLIC TIMETABLE GRAB BAGS. $9.00 worth of TT's only $4, $18.00 worth of TT's only $8, $27.00 worth of TT's only $12. My selection but I guarantee a nice variety of roads, dates and forms, all excellent condition, most items early 60's. Special clear plastic covers for public timetables, beautiful, strong, over 100,000 sold so far, 6¢ each. Order any quantity any time. Sample free. Large public timetable list 50¢. I buy timetable collections.
Tom Coval, 21 E. Robin Road, Holland, PA 18966.

RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

25¢

VOL. 3 NO. 18
SECOND ISSUE OF
SEPTEMBER 1973
#68

AMTRAK CHICAGO - ST. LOUIS
Effective October 1, 1973

STATE HOUSE 305 Daily	FRENCH TURBO 303 Daily ex Sat	Conventional Train 307 Sat & Sun only	FRENCH TURBO 301 Daily ex Sat & Sun		STATE HOUSE 300 Daily	FRENCH TURBO 302 Daily ex Sun	FRENCH TURBO 304 Daily ex Sat & Sun	Conventional Train 306 Sat & Sun only
6:15p	5:10p	8:10a	8:10a	Chicago	10:20a	12:24p	9:24p	10:05p
6:55p	5:53p	8:53a	8:53a	Joliet	9:35a	11:35a	8:35p	9:14p
7:47p	-	9:46a	-	Pontiac	8:53a	-	-	8:20p
8:30p	7:10p	10:20a	10:10a	Ar Bloomington Dp	8:05a	10:17a	7:17p	7:49p
8:35p	7:13p	10:27a	10:13a	Dp Bloomington Ar	8:00a	10:14a	7:14p	7:43p
9:02p	-	10:55a	-	Lincoln	7:30a	-	-	7:06p
9:35p	8:10p	11:30a	11:10a	Springfield	7:00a	9:16a	6:16p	6:37p
10:11p	-	12:06p	-	Carlinville	6:18a	-	-	5:56p
10:51p	9:16p	12:43p	12:16p	Alton	5:48a	8:10a	5:10p	5:24p
11:50p	10:09p	1:40p	1:09p	St. Louis	5:00a	7:25a	4:25p	4:30p

ON THE COVER: The schedule of Amtrak's revised Chicago-St. Louis service as of October 1. See news item elsewhere in this issue concerning the initiation of French Turbotrain runs on this route.

LETTERS

Your story on Mexico in the last issue is great. I enjoyed every page of the whole issue. I especially appreciate your kind remarks regarding Amtrak's INTER-AMERICAN.

Regarding the lunch counter diner lounge car #8340 (on the INTER-AMERICAN): This car is former UP 5008 built by St. Louis Car Co. in 1959. Amtrak has so far purchased 2 of these cars, 8340 & 8341, the latter being the former UP 5010. According to The Official Register of Passenger Train Equipment of March 1970, the UP had 12 of this series numbered 5002-5016. The 2 cars Amtrak purchased prior to being refurbished were used on the Milwaukee-Chicago-St. Louis trains. Number 8340 was refurbished at Beech Grove shops in Feb. 1973 and went on the INTER-AMERICAN in July. For the first 30 days problems with the air conditioning were frequent. However, after replacement of an electrical panel, new float valve on the sub-cooler, new switch to blowers, patching many Freon leaks in the system and many other small yet troublesome problems with the a.c. system, this car has made about a dozen trips without failures. Here in Fort Worth the ATSF Railway has a group of mechanical men who are dedicated to providing Amtrak with equipment which will work. Jim Bell, an electrician, in particular can't be beat. He stayed with this car until he finished the job. I wish Amtrak had a thousand more like him.

I am hopeful, of course, that President Nixon will sign the Amtrak bill and also that he will not impound any of the money. When and if the INTER-AMERICAN can be extended to run from the Midwest thru Arkansas to Dallas, Waco, Temple, Austin, San Antonio and Laredo, I am sure this train will do as well as the Montreal train is doing.

I was very interested in the last paragraph of the story regarding NdeM's desire to upgrade its passenger service. As you know, Amtrak moved the scheduled departure of the INTER-AMERICAN back 2 hours to 11:30am in order to assure connection with the northbound AZTEC EAGLE, which is due in at 6:25am. However, NdeM has made this connection only 3 or 4 times and as a result it has hurt tremendously Amtrak's northbound business. Also, many people who ride the AZTEC EAGLE southbound are very discouraged when they arrive in Mexico City anywhere from 8 to 24 hours late, and choose to fly north rather than use the NdeM. This problem must be corrected before Amtrak's service to Mexico can succeed. Here in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area Amtrak receives many calls regarding service to Mexico, but when advised of the situation of the NdeM's missed connections and late trains, many people use other travel means. Also, the slow schedule over the MoPac between Milano and Laredo really hurts the train. This schedule could be 2 hours faster between Fort Worth and Laredo and save the embarrassment of everything but donkey-drawn wagons passing you on the adjoining interstate highway between San Antonio and Laredo as you poke along at 40mph. Maybe this will be corrected by the ammendments to the Amtrak law.

John A. Mills, Station Manager

Fort Worth, Texas

Here's my subscription renewal check--in the hope that it will save you the trouble of a renewal notice--because I'm pretty much out of the running in the First Sierra/SFZ Snowfall Contest (would you accept The First Snowfall on Bridgeport Through the

(continued on page 19)

Rail Travel Newsletter, Vol. 3, No. 18 (Whole No. 68), 2nd Issue of September, 1973. Published twice monthly by Message Media, P.O. Box 9007, Berkeley, California 94709. Subscription $6.00 per year; single copy 25¢ STAFF: James Russell, Editor; Paul Rayton, Editor-at-Large; Kenneth Maylath, East Coast Correspondent; Peter Roehm, Northeastern Correspondent; Doug Ellis, Staff Photographer.
Scheduled mailing date for this issue: October 1, 1973.

ICC DECIDES AMTRAK SHOULD PAY PENN CENTRAL MORE MONEY FOR RUNNING TRAINS

The Interstate Commerce Commission ruled late this month that Amtrak should increase its payments to Penn Central, approximately doubling the $40 million it now pays the railroad for handling its trains, which constitute a third of all Amtrak trains. The decision must be approved by the judge who is overseeing the Penn Central bankruptcy case. Amtrak's wish to scale payments to quality of service would have to be negotiated separately from the present decision. Amtrak's deficit would of course rise under the ICC's plan, and this would mean that the corporation would either have to request more money from Congress or raise fares. It is likely that the other railroads who run trains for Amtrak would also ask for higher reimbursements if the ICC plan goes through.

PENN CENTRAL PROBLEM COMING DOWN TO THE WIRE

The problem of the Penn Central bankruptcy, and that of other Northeastern railroads, is getting close to the time when a solution must be found. The snag at the present is that Congress and the administration do not agree on the method of handling the bankruptcy. The administration wants to use a minimum amount of federal funds, and would probably veto any Congressional attempt to set up a semi-nationalized organization to take over the Northeastern roads. Representative Brock Adams of Washington state, a high-ranking House Transportation Committee member, has warned that if the bankrupt railroads are forced to shut down, the U.S. would experience a depression within 60 days. The administration and Congress are deadlocked on plans, and Adams warns that if it continues, President Nixon will force either subsidizing the railroads or outright nationalization. October 12 has been set for a hearing in Federal District Court in Philadelphia by the judge overseeing the PC problem. There are indications that a 30-day delay in formulating plans, beyond the earlier October 1 cutoff date might be made.

AMTRAK PLANS AUTO-CARRYING SERVICE BETWEEN CHICAGO AND FLORIDA

The press has learned that Amtrak is looking into a new auto-train type service between Chicago and Florida, perhaps to begin this winter. This would be in direct competition with Auto-Train's planned Cincinnati to Florida service. The Florida "end-point" of the Amtrak run has not yet been decided. The Amtrak appropriations bill still in Congress allows Auto-Train to compete with Amtrak in running car-carrying trains.

MINOR PANIC AS GAS STATIONS CLOSE TO PROTEST PRICE CONTROLS

Thousands of gasoline stations in Northern California closed for a 4-day period starting September 21 as a protest against President Nixon's freeze on retail gas prices. Motorists waited in long lines at stations that remained open. Those closed were independently operated stations, while some company-owned outlets continued to pump gas while it held out. Police reported fewer autos on the highways during the 4-day period because of the fear of running out of fuel, and commuter traffic was judged to be 20 or 25% lighter. Public transit operators reported an increase in patronage in the San Francisco area. As the protest shutdown ended, President Nixon relented and indicated he would permit wholesale price increases to be passed on to the consumer.

WHY AMTRAK AGREED TO RETAIN THE NATIONAL LIMITED AND FLORIDIAN

In a front-page article, the United Transportation Union News disputed Amtrak's statement that it withdrew the discontinuance petitions of the NATIONAL LIMITED and THE FLORIDIAN because of substantial ridership increases this summer, calling the explanation "poppycock." According to the UTU, it was pressure from Congress and other sources, and not the ridership figures, which Amtrak knew were rising all along.

MEXICAN CAR SPOTTING

HOW TO DETERMINE THE ANCESTRY OF MEXICAN RAILROAD CARS by Peter Putnam Bretz

The following applies mainly to U.S. cars sold to Mexico (see Mexico article in our last issue), altho some may apply to Amtrak equipment. For most Amtrak equipment, I'd recommend Wayner's "Amtrak Car Spotter." Confronted with an NdeM pullman car of which you'd like to know the country of origin, the builder, railroad, and original car name, the following check points would in most cases turn up the needed information:

(1) Check the exterior first. Often the car would be merely repainted; by looking at the proper angle, one can read the embossed lettering of the old railroad, as well as the old car name or number.

(2) Check the trucks. Sometimes you can still read the old lubrication stencil of the home road. Santa Fe printed its corporate initials on 6-wheel trucks.

(3) Look the car over again. Does it have that "Harriman look" (rounded roof), or the Rock Island look (silver fluting above the windows, smooth below)? C&O cars all had stainless steel fluting below the windows and smooth above. Also, C&O coaches were divided in the center (tell from window configuration). Does pullman car have 3 or 4 thick lateral ribs along its smooth sides? It might be ex-Pennsy. All-silver fluting nearly always means Budd was the builder. Look for skirts below the car body on stainless cars--Burlington did that; the car may be ex-CALIFORNIA ZEPHYR equipment. Check restroom windows on coaches (I spotted Erie Lackawanna company name etched into the glass).

(4) Check the vestibule. Outside the interior door, look for the patent numbers plate. Years of manufacture can be ascertained, plus the builder. And on the door the machined former name of the car may still be there, sometimes painted over with a new name in Spanish. Inside the door, the name plate may remain; e.g., "This car built and designed by the Budd Co. especially for the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad."

(5) Look inside the car. Don't bother with roomettes or bedrooms, as nothing identifying is usually there (except English words). Check the tools. The NYC and the Santa Fe, among others, etched the road name and car name into ax handles, hammers, etc. ("Herkimer County" was discovered that way by me from a car named "Sierra Gorda"--a 13-bedroom car). Does the car have fluorescent or incandescent lighting? Incandescent bulbs were used primarily pre-World War II, fluorescent after. Look at the fire extinguisher. Some railroad names are listed on old tags or the container itself. In heavyweight pullmans, prowl around in the linen closets. Sometimes the car name is stencilled right on the side of the upper berth ladders (I identified "Red Rock Pass" that way).

(6) If all else fails, look into the electrical compartments. Using a fountain pen, one can open the latch. A word of caution: Don't fiddle around with the electrical parts themselves--you may get zapped and never ride another pullman car. Be careful. The only point of interest is the inside of the cabinet door. There are all the printed data and forms, etc. Most are new and in Spanish, but search the little door racks; most of the time you will find the "old" electrical info. The railroad name and car name are always prominent. This way I learned that "Marruecos" originally belonged to the New York Central, and was named "Bronx River"--a 10/6 car.

If all inspections don't turn up the needed information, be sure to note the Mexican name, railroad and car number. A query to various publishers and/or railroads may turn up the necessary information. Or you may have to guess. NdeM 10/6 pullman "Finlandia," which I didn't inspect at the time I rode it, was checked in the 1961 Pullman Descriptive List of Cars, 1967 supplement. The numbers revealed it to be either "Hocking River" or "Hudson River," take my pick. (I wish it was "Hudson River"--NYC--as that's where I grew up.)

Readers could certainly suggest their own, perhaps better, methods of identification.

canadian news letter

HISTORIC KICKING HORSE Pass on CP Rail's main line west of Lake Louise will soon echo to the sound of new rail construction. CP Rail has announced a 7-yr, $40-million project to double-track the main line in Banff and Yoho National Parks to eliminate severe congestion. The new line will feature a 1% grade, a substantial reduction from the existing 2.2% on the west side of the pass in the Spiral Tunnel zone, east of Field, B.C. This track would also be electrified should CP Rail move ahead to wires. The domed CANADIAN trains pass this area eastbound in daylight the year around, and westbound in summer. The Trans-Canada highway thru this area is built on the original 4% grade of the railway. Meanwhile, CN is planning to begin work next summer on the laying of concrete ties for construction of a new line between Winnipeg and Portage la Prairie. The concrete ties, almost identical to those used by British Rail, have been tried on a 4-mile track near Jasper. While the ties are more costly than wood, the price differential has been narrowing, due to increasing lumber prices. They provide a smoother, quieter ride than wood...

ONTARIO NORTHLAND RAILWAY should drop its passenger train service and use buses instead, says a municipal committee in Timmins, Ontario. The railway now runs only one train daily to the town...

THE AFOREMENTIONED RAILWAY runs between North Bay and Moosonee, Ontario, with passenger cars going over CN tracks into Toronto. When Thomas Coval of Holland, Pennsylvania tried to ride this line in August, he came up against the railroad strike. He reports as follows: "We were greeted in Toronto by 8 smiling CN ticket clerks all singing the same song--'there will be a rail strike at 12 midnight; the Northland will not depart this evening.' Since there are no roads into Moosonee, only one possibility remained--air. Sure enough, Air Canada provided efficient jet service to Timmins where we experienced the trip of our lives on Austin Airlines' DC-3, the last scheduled DC-3 flight in North America, from Timmins to Moosonee.

"The strike ended 3 days later on a Sunday, but not in time to run the POLAR BEAR EXPRESS from Cochran to Moosonee. We were greeted instead at 6pm by a delightful mixed train carrying 25 freight cars, 4 baggage cars, and a swollen consist of 6 Ontario Northland cars, including one food bar, lounge car, and one counter service coffee shop coach. The word was that the POLAR BEAR would be up the next day loaded to capacity and, therefore, to insure a connection to the Northland in Cochran back to Toronto, my wife and I decided to venture on the mixed train departing at 9am rather than wait for the POLAR BEAR's return at 6pm.

"Our decision paid off with a delightfully unusual ride and perhaps the only regularly scheduled streamline mixed train in North America. The trip back included stops along the way to pick up canoes and hikers, smooth easy starts unlike the typical Penn Central jackrabbit starts on the Philadelphia-N.Y. clockers, showing how an engineer who takes his job seriously can manage even a train with 25 cars of freight in a smooth, efficient manner. The northbound POLAR BEAR met us at approximately 11:30am and our fears of a heavy consist were well-founded, as the POLAR BEAR contained 20 cars loaded with 800 people. The consist was a mixed bag of ON and CN equipment, and even included 3 coaches with GO-transit designations. I spotted at least two dining cars, and perhaps there were more.

"Our arrival in Cochran was 1½ hours behind schedule at 4pm--not the fastest run in North America, certainly--183 miles in 7 hours. However, the air conditioning worked in all cars and people were in a happy, leisurely vacation mood. Incidentally, this train with six revenue cars contained but one conductor who was without question not overworked.

"The NORTHLAND arrived with our slumber car from Kapuskasing on time at 10:30pm. Other slumber cars would be added thru the night from Timmins and Noranda. I was treated to my first stay in 28 years in section sleeping accommodations, as one third of the sleeping car contained upper and lower berths with the typical green pullman curtains. All sleeper space was sold out to Toronto as we moved quickly

into the night on a surprisingly smooth roadbed.

"Before I knew it, there were shouts of 'last call for breakfast.' My wife and I were greeted in the diner by a flip, sarcastic CN waiter in charge who proceeded to insult most of the patrons some time during their breakfasts with remarks such as 'Everything o.k. dear? Well, it had better be, because it's all you're going to get.' My wife remarked that there must be a job waiting for this man on the Penn Central. The food was decent but served on plastic plates with airline-type silverware on clothless tables. This waiter's attitude was in marked contrast to the professional service rendered by our sleeping car porter who showed a sincere enthusiasm for his job.

"Our arrival in downtown Toronto was on the advertised, and as we strolled thru Toronto's Union Station I saw signs indicating the definite chance of the resumption of the rail strike the following weekend. As it turned out, we were fortunate to ride the entire route to Toronto on the one day it was fully operable.

"My experience impressed on me the value of strong publicity relative to the vacation travel market. The ON spends a good deal of money telling North Americans about the land of the POLAR BEAR EXPRESS and this investment is returned with an average daily ridership during the summer of over 500 patrons. This experience also gave me a glimpse into the progressively deteriorating Canadian National passenger attitude. It would be a rare sight even on the Penn Central to find a dining car waiter with such an unprofessional attitude."

Mr. Coval concludes his report by noting his perception of Canadian rail travel as a mixed bag--on the one hand heavily patronized excursion trains, unusual consists, well-maintained equipment and decent roadbeds; on the other, clear labor problems in terms of work rules and the attitude of on-train personnel which appear to foreshadow what's ahead for the passenger. "Rail travel in Canada could be described as similar to that of the U.S. in the late 50's, which leads to the conclusion, ride them while you can."

ESQUIMALT & NANAIMO RAILWAY, CP Rail-owned subsidiary on Vancouver Island, has relocated the Victoria, B.C. passenger station from its former site near Cormorant & Store Streets in downtown Victoria to Catherine St. and Esquimalt Road several blocks west of the Inner Harbour drawbridge. It is expected that the track zone on the bridge will be converted to additional highway lanes. There has been no change in the daily-except-Sunday schedule. The old station was torn down to make way for street alterations. The new station, 8 miles away, is just within the city limits of Victoria. (The E&N resumed passenger runs after the strike on Sept. 6, while no trains were yet running on the mainland at Vancouver. Island crews returned to work on the 5th, reports Thomas Swinney, who also informs us that visitors to Victoria without a car can reach the Victoria Pacific Railway, a steam tourist line, daily except Sundays via South West Coach Lines. Buses start on Humbolt just below the Empress Hotel, and run about every 90 minutes.)...

COMMUNITY SUPPORT IS growing, says Robert Campbell, committee member of the Owen Sound, Ontario chamber of commerce, to sue CP Rail and CN for $800 million if they do not restore RDC passenger service abandoned Nov. 1, 1970. In 1875 the community raised a million dollars for rail construction and in addition provided land for for rights-of-way in return for service "in perpetuity". If that $1 million had been invested at 8½% in 1875, it would have grown to $800 million at the present time. Passenger train advocates will soon present a plan for restoration of service to D. H. Jones, head of the railway transport committee of the Canadian Transport Commission. Until 1970, CN served Owen Sound with a daily RDC run on an indirect route to Toronto, 140 miles south; and CP Rail operated tri-weekly service over a more direct route...

TORONTO'S TTC TRANSIT system has recorded an enormous 12.4% increase in business over last year--double what planners had estimated. Thus the expected deficit will be much less than predicted. Opening of 2½ more miles of subway route in March,

two months after the two-zone system was abandoned, has helped produce the increase, officials say...

DESIGN WORK IS proceeding in Toronto for the planned western extension of the 16-mile Bloor Subway from Islington to Kipling, a little under a mile. Studies are now in progress to determine feasibility of extending the Bloor line eastward 1.6 miles from Warden to Eglinton. A streetcar-type route, labeled GO-Urban, may be built eastward from the proposed new subway terminal...

SERIOUS CONSIDERATION IS being given to restoration of the old Toronto-islands paddlewheel ferry "Trillium," now a moldering hulk in a Toronto Island lagoon. The 1910 ferry was operated with steam power until retirement in 1956, and is the source of much sentiment in the Toronto area. The repair bill would be in excess of $500,000, but less than half the cost of a similar ferry built new today...

THE SUPER CONTINENTAL of CN pulled into Edmonton from the West September 10, the first passenger train to do so since July 26 when the regional and later nationwide railroad strike began. CP was also returning to normal operations at the same time. Then on the night of Sept. 13, members of the United Transportation Union struck the British Columbia Railway, formerly known as the Pacific Great Eastern. In Newfoundland, a crowd of tourists stranded since the rail strikes shut down the CN ferries, got aboard the boats at last Sept. 2 to return to the mainland after 13 days on the island. All had lavish praise for the kindness of the islanders, who provided food and shelter for travelers for many long days...

CP RAIL WILL add two months to the Seattle-Victoria "Princess Marguerite" steamer season in summer, 1974. Service will begin May 1 and continue thru the end of October, the longest season since the Seattle World's Fair in 1962. CP Rail has not yet announced dates of the last runs, but Oct. 31 is a good guess. It is expected that large numbers of visitors to the Spokane Expo World's Fair will increase tourism throughout the Pacific Northwest. Foot traffic on the "Princess Marguerite" increased well during the 1973 season despite: 1) a rise in excursion fares from $9 to $9.50; 2) an earlier 8am departure from Seattle, and 3) a shortened season. Despite the B.C. Ferries trike in August, auto traffic on the "Marguerite" was spotty many days. Officials blame the gas-shortage scare...

CP'S FORMER B.C. Coastal service liner "Princess Elizabeth," mainstay on the Vancouver-Victoria night boat run for almost 30 years after her delivery in 1931, has embarked on a new career. Renamed the "Highland Queen," she will be moored at Nigg, Cromarty Firth in Scotland to provide housing for crews building oil rigs for North Seas exploration. After closure of the Victoria night boat service, she was renamed "Pegasus" and cruised in the Greek Islands from The Pireaus for Epirotiki Lines...

AMTRAK HAS NOT been endearing itself to passengers destined to transfer to the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL from the northbound COAST STARLIGHT. They have not been told of bus substitutions for the B.C. run (due to the Canadian rail strike) until arrival in Seattle, and as a result, bus drivers have found themselves with irritable or emotional passengers on their hands. Seems like a lot of STARLIGHT passengers are confirmed bus haters...

TWO MAJOR TRANSPORT projects in the Toronto area have come under severe criticism within the last few months. The first is that for a Scarborough Expressway east from downtown thru older ethnic neighborhoods to suburban Scarborough. Two major political figures have recently announced that their support has turned to opposition, perhaps relegating the freeway to the same dustbin as the Spadina Expressway, killed two years ago. The second proposal to take flak is the GO-Urban system, a lightweight, air-cushion train to be built as an elevated. Opponents, pointing to Turbotrain failures and lack of escape routes, have labeled GO-Urban an "unproven flying coffin"...

TRAINS 7&8 EMPIRE BUILDER

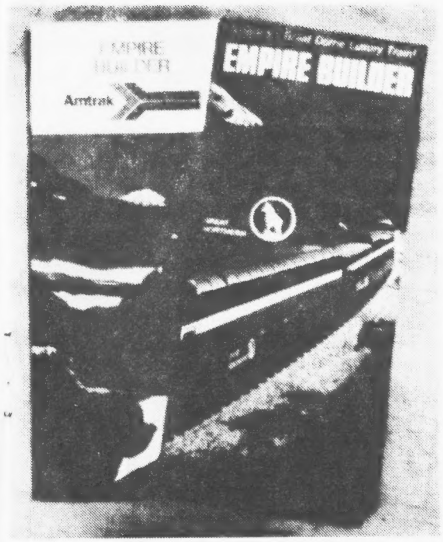
The train that Amtrak now runs as the EMPIRE BUILDER, No. 7&8 recalls a long history, and is named for the man who ambitiously built a transportation empire near the end of the last century. James J. Hill, of Great Northern Railway fame, was a Canadian by birth, coming from Ontario. He settled in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1856 and looked for opportunities to make himself known in the transportation scene.

When the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad went bankrupt in the panic year of 1873, Jim Hill saw his chance, and thru arduous negotiating managed to acquire control of the road five years later. The next year the railroad became the St. Paul, Minnesota & Manitoba Railroad, and Hill and his partners began building toward a connection with Canadian Pacific.

But Hill's big ambition was to reach the Pacific, in direct competition with Northern Pacific, and as NP was completing its transcontinental line into Portland in 1883, Hill was taking over the presidency of his railroad. In 1889 the road was reorganized as the Great Northern and four years later completed its line into Everett, Washington, reaching the Pacific. That year another panic hit, and UP, NP and ATSF went bankrupt, with SP on the verge of bankruptcy. But Hill's GN remained financially solid, and in two more years Hill succeeded in taking over control of the NP as well. At this time E. H. Harriman appeared on the scene, taking over both UP and SP, and the two titans, Harriman and Hill battled away.

For this man Hill the EMPIRE BUILDER, which first ran in 1929, was named. The train was preceded by the ORIENTAL LIMITED, named for the Asiatic trade that Hill was after. The BUILDER ran Chicago-Seattle, while the ORIENTAL LIMITED had a section to Portland as well, over SP&S.

The first major change in the E.B. came in 1937 when streamlined coaches began to be introduced. By 1947, the train was completely streamlined. In 1950 a Portland connection over SP&S was inaugurated. The following year this luxury train was completely re-equipped with five new consists and the train at that time was called the MID-CENTURY EMPIRE BUILDER. The previously-used equipment was used for another train, the WESTERN STAR, which went on the schedule of the ORIENTAL LIMITED, whose name was dropped.



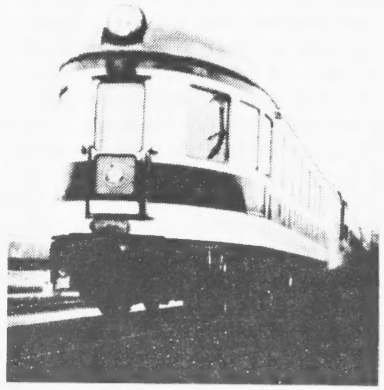
Left: new and old. Recent Amtrak full-color route brochure with pre-Amtrak Great Northern advertising folder.

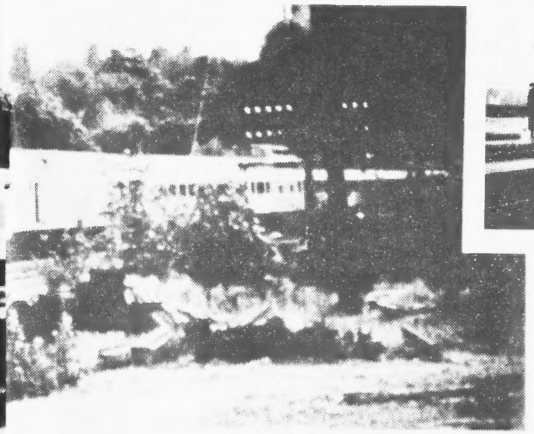
Added to the BUILDER'S equipment roster in 1955 were a set of Budd-built domes: 16 dome coaches and 6 full-length dome lounges that GN called Great Domes, for pullman passengers only. Burlington and SP&s owned part of this dome fleet. Usually 3 dome coaches and one Great Dome ran on the train on its scenic route thru the Rockies of Montana.

GN's traditional paint scheme, orange and green, gave way to Big Sky Blue with white in 1967. In 1970, after GN merged with Burlington, NP, and SP&S to become Burlington Northern, a new paint scheme of green, white and black began to appear. All three paint jobs may still be seen on various pieces of equipment.

When Amtrak took over the passenger trains on May 1, 1971, trains 31 & 32 of BN, the EMPIRE BUILDER, were selected to run the Chicago-Seattle route, using Milwaukee Road instead of Burlington between Chicago & Minneapolis, and the NP between Spokane and Seattle. The bulk of the route was GN thru northern Montana. By the time the second, July 12, 1971 Amtrak schedule appeared, however, influential Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana had persuaded Amtrak to put on the "experimental" tri-weekly NORTH COAST HIAWATHA thru southern Montana, where there is more population. The trains ran combined Spokane-Seattle. (On June 13 of this year, the NCH began running separately, using the GN route in Washington state for a 1-year experimental period.)

When Amtrak took over, the Spokane-Portland connection over SP&S was eliminated. Northwesterners see that as a logical extension of further train service. On Nov. 14, 1971, Amtrak gave the BUILDER its present numbers, 7 & 8.





1970--the last pre-Amtrak summer and the 1st post-merger saw the mostly Big Sky Blue train drawn by 3 engines including 2 orange & green covered wagons. Bringing up the rear was orange and green GN 1295 "Little Chief Mountain." Photos from Kodachrome originals by Wes Roberts.

TODAY. . .

THE EMPIRE BUILDER - A "MAJOR EVENT" EVEN IN 1973 by Glenn Lee

Lucius Beebe once wrote in his San Francisco Chronicle column: "A ride on the EMPIRE BUILDER is a major event in the life of any rail afficionado." This was during the height of the BUILDER's excellence, 1955-1966 under GN management. A recent roundtrip on the EB from Seattle to Idaho indicates that altho some of the melody lingers on, things have surely changed under Amtrak.

I'd been laid up most of the spring and summer with a bad case of mononucleosis, and followed my doctor's orders to get to a warm and dry climate for a few weeks to speed recovery. Northern Idaho was my choice. As soon as I felt able, I boarded the great train at Seattle King St., and settled into unrefurbished Burlington sleeper "Silver Ridge."

The EB ran a full 18 cars this summer, with 350-400 passengers per trip. And in mid-August, traditionally the heaviest month on the Northwest runs, things can get late. In fact, immediately. We pulled out of Seattle 20 minutes late in a pouring rain, and ran consistently late to Idaho, despite the more-than-adequate padding in the Amtrak timetable.

Two new 500-series Amtrak SDP-40F engines were doing business on the point, and emphasized complaints of the crews--they are hard to handle, and bump and jerk a lot. Also, in mountain grade territory two of the 3000hp units aren't quite enough for 18 cars. They offer only 333hp per car, in contrast to the old UP standard of 400-480hp per car. So naturally we lost some time lugging up the 2.2% grade to the summit of Stampede Pass.

Still feeling groggy from mono, I neither felt terribly inquisitive nor social. But an hour out, passing Kanaskat, I decided to explore the "great dome" car. The series of 6 "great domes" on the EMPIRE BUILDER had always been known as the pets of John Budd, GN president thru the 50s and 60s. I'm biased, but nothing on the SUPER CHIEF was better.

As I entered "River View" I was struck by a solid wall of cigarette smoke and eau de locker room! Not only did "River View" have no air conditioning, but it also lacked ventilation. Not a fan was turning. Still, the car was heavily occupied by happy tourists waiting for their views of the Cascades. A cool and rainy day was all that kept the car livable. Downstairs, alas, the vandals had arrived. The lounge-bar area one hour out looked heavily lived in, and where the chair for the writing desk belonged sat the biggest waste paper sack I'd ever seen.

Unable to accommodate to the high air pollution index in "River View," I moved forward to one of the ex-GN dome coaches, still splashy and beautiful as ever with Haida-Indian drawings decorating the bulkheads. These wonderful cars have just finished their 19th summer of operation, and are as beautiful as they could possibly be under present conditions. But--the fine hand of Amtrak was surely present. Two of the forward dome windows were of lexan--and had been rendered 100% unusable by condensation due to the cool weather. A young brakeman checking in the dome stared at this mess and then apologized to all passengers in the dome for their inability to see forward.

Coming down the east slope of Stampede to Easton--tragedy! Crews were removing the running copper of Milwaukee Road trolley wire. As we sped east we could see that the catenary and stringers were intact, but the end had already fallen upon the route of the electrified OLYMPIAN HIAWATHA. Crews say the overhead will be out Cle Elum to Cedar Falls by winter.

Following its pre-merger plans, BN has shifted most freight traffic to the ex-SP&S line down the Columbia River, or the ex-GN line over Stevens Pass. As a result, the ex-NP line thru the Yakima Valley now has only two freights per day, and BN is letting the track go. Once the EB picked up speed south of Yakima, deterioration of

the track was immediately apparent. Former NP president Denny, a "crushed-rock ballast man," would turn over in his grave could he see parts of his main line now.

Most of the bumpiness was "swing and sway with Sammy Kaye," but a few stretches were "Dynamite Dan and the Jackhammers."

Arrival at Pasco was 29 minutes late, and departure 35 minutes down. It was at Pasco that the young, handsome and aggressive Amtrak passenger rep opened up the equipment cavity in "River View," as carknockers looked on, and physically wrestled with and started the air conditioner engines--only to have them stop within seconds! Looking agitated and worn, he told me that the fuel oil was impure, and that the a.c. equipment was shutting down automatically to protect itself. He asked that carknocker staff to wire Spokane and ask for assistance when the EB arrived there some 3 hours later. They said they would.

It was at this point that the a.c. in UP 1504, "Placid Lake," gracefully and with dignity finally folded. First to complain was a young married couple from Philadelphia. "Will this last all the way to Chicago?" he asked gruffly. I had not the heart to tell him 'twould probably be thus.

After an unexplained 10-min stop near South Cheney, the great train rolled grandly into Spokane over the new Latah Creek Trestle, now named the Ralph Budd Bridge for a former GN president--only to stop about 5 blocks short of the ex-NP depot. More Amtrak problems: In NP days, the NP station had a "herder," a roving switchman who lined up entrance and exit to the passenger yard for all trains. Now, under Amtrak, the train brakemen must do this, so that Amtrak doesn't get charged for a herder. This adds about 10min to the transcon run, and means that Amtrak will eventually get socked for installation of terminal CTC, or the wages of a rehired herder.

A dependable railway

Altho hundreds of mechanical refrigerator cars pass through Spokane every day on "hot" BN freights, and altho there must be many men on the BN payroll in Spokane who know how to handle a.c. problems, there was nary a one in sight to repair "River View's" a.c. system. Again, the energetic, Clark Gablesque Amtrak rep crawled into "River View's" equipment compartment and tinkered. With a loud roar, the a.c. was finally made to go once again, only to fail within seconds. As we left Spokane, again with the delay to close switches, "River View's" air conditioning was dead-dead-dead.

I talked to one of the switching crews in Sandpoint. Amtrak came up in the conversation. "Amtrak?" asked one of the young workers, "We don't have anything to do with them. They're a private outfit." This must be the current BN line. The moral is clear: if you want to stay "clean" and get ahead in BN these days, stay as far away as possible from Amtrak, the intruder, the interloper (the pearl in the oyster?). Like forget to help with dome a.c. engines whenever you can.

The ex-NP main line east from Spokane is, with the BN merger, a heavy throat, with 30-40 trains per day, now that most GN business comes this way. It is the equivalent of Tehachapi or Cajon Pass--a great place to watch trains. If they are on time, the eastbound and westbound BUILDERS meet at Rathdrum, Idaho, near the site of the new Hauser Yard (to be the Pacific Northwest's equivalent of SP's Colton when it is finished). Rathdrum came and went--no Number 7. Brakeman said it was over 6 hours late. North of the Granite Lake line change (put in after the disastrous 1962 wreck of the NORTH COAST LIMITED, which jumped the tracks at 85mph in a 35mph zone and plunged into the lake) the track gets very bumpy. I was thrown and hurled in my roomette in "Silver Ridge;" and plenty happy to arrive at Sandpoint for recuperation, 29 min late.

Sandpoint is one of the most blessed communities in the U.S., and is a great place to watch trains. The best spot of all to stay is the inexpensive Lakeside Motel, one block from BN station, city beach and park, and restaurants. A stay here guarantees relaxation and pleasure to all--and its site on an arm of the lake makes it beautiful.

With little to do other than sit, by doctor's orders, I watched EB and Amtrak very closely (only letting slip by unnoted the 4:15am passage of tri-weekly #10).

It is apparent from a 3-week stand of train watching that Amtrak has a long way to go. As reported in RTN earlier, the BUILDER leaving Chicago Aug. 8 went into emergency brake application near Havre, badly flattening lots of wheels. So bad in fact that many passengers had to be shifted to better cars even tho speed was held to 50. Apparently damaged was Great Dome "Glacier View," which vanished from the lineups after that. At the height of the summer tourist season, this dome-lounge was not replaced even tho protection equipment was available.

Thus, this damaged set of EMPIRE BUILDER equipment left Seattle on Aug. 11, 17, 23; and again from Chicago on Aug. 14, 20, and 26 with no lounge except the forward lunch counter buffet-lounge! Finally, ex-GN 1290 "Appekunny Mountain," a full lounge-observation from the 1951 BUILDER kept in Seattle as protection for the Great Domes, appeared on the BUILDER leaving Seattle Aug. 29. Both this car, and the ex-SCL round-end tavern observation 3341 used on the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL could have gone on the BUILDER immediately. Since the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL was annulled most of August because of the rotating Canadian rail strike, the 3341 would not have been missed at all. Even if it had, it's better to stab a 4-hr run carrying 100-125 passengers than a 50-hr run carrying 350-400 passengers. Yet it took nearly three weeks for someone at Amtrak to grasp this. Compared to the precision and menopausic fussiness with which GN ran the EMPIRE BUILDER, we have apparently sunken into some minor technico-centric transport dark age! My eyes glaze over!

Another bad problem is the Amtrak flat wheel syndrome. Sleeping cars going West at Sandpoint with flat wheels return two nights later time after time with no work done on them at all. In Seattle, I talked to the carknockers who met the damaged EB on August 10 at 7pm. I asked how many flat wheels could be changed out, and got a stricken look from one conscientious workman who said: "There is no night shift at the wheel pit anymore. They won't start changing wheels until 10am tomorrow (train due out 2:30pm). We'll have as many cars as possible lined out and replaced with protection, and maybe we can change out five sets of wheels, but that's it." He did did not have the heart to speak the words which would have told me that there would be a lot of flat wheels going back out on No. 8 August 11.

My consist notebook is replete with "flat wheel" notations, but the worst of all was Sept. 4 on No. 7 westbound when UP 1446 "Pacific Union" had such a bad set of flat wheels that the car must have been uninhabitable! Perhaps even dangerous. And two nights later, as it worked East on No. 8, the flat wheels were just as loud, if not more so. Not one bit of work had been done on "Pacific Union's" bad wheels! Amtrak has not yet surmounted the problem that UP cars have non-standard size wheels. Amtrak has sent UP cars all over the system, but spare parts are not available every place they are needed.

I returned to Seattle on No. 7, and by chance was assigned a roomette again in "Silver Ridge." On the rough track south of Sandpoint I sat in Great Dome "River View" once again. This time a.c. and ventilation were working full blast. A beautiful, glorious ride! The rough track is much less so in the Great Dome, and I am inclined to think that non-rehabilitated "Silver Ridge" may have developed a bad case of the famous Budd bounce, the only major fault on Budd equipment. Downstairs, a world of change had taken place in "River View's" lower lounge.

The SDP-40F units that powered #7 back to Seattle were much less bumpy and jerky. Perhaps they had finally been "broken in." We met #', absolutely on time, at Rathdrum. Since Sept. 1, everything has been on time.

The real problem here seems to be Amtrak. In 1971 we had hoped that the new public agency would continue the expertise and elan of the old private operators, banishing their hangups. Instead the expertise and the elan have all too frequently vanished, and a new crop of hangups has arisen to expand in geometric fashion. Is Judge Medina correct? Is 90% of the world's work done badly? Quo vadis?

We arrived in Seattle on time. The COAST STARLIGHT was loading some 400 passengers on an adjoining track. When el mono is gone, I hope it will carry me off to the Southland in style.

THE FRANCO-AMERICAN TURBO

The French-built Turbotrains are beginning service between Chicago and St. Louis on October 1, Amtrak announced late in September. (See the schedule on our front cover.) With the advent of these new trains, described earlier in RTN, the Milwaukee to St. Louis route is restructured. Complete details were not available as this page is prepared, and any late news will appear in the Mixed Train of Thoughts section. Apparently, however, the Milwaukee-St. Louis trains ABRAHAM LINCOLN and PRAIRIE STATE are being eliminated, and with them the parlor car service over the route. A new train, called the STATE HOUSE, is being inaugurated Oct. 1 to fill

On the delivery trip from New Jersey to Chicago, the French Turbos attracted large crowds. In this Amtrak photo from the cab of the first train delivered, spectators at Fort Wayne, Indiana line the tracks.

in along with the Turbos on the Chicago-St. Louis route. Amtrak said this train is designed to give shoppers and business travelers "almost a full day in Chicago." It offers reclining seat coaches and a lounge car with beverage, snack and light meal services. The Chicago-Springfield portion of the STATE HOUSE's run is financed in part by the state of Illinois under Section 403(b) of the Rail Passenger Act of 1970. The one-way coach fare Chicago-St. Louis is $14.50, with no extra fare required for the Turbotrains. An Amtrak spokesman said that the Turbo service would be extended to Milwaukee later this year.

An inaugural ceremony for the new trains was held Sept. 28, beginning with speeches at Chicago Union Station at 9am. Then the first train was to make its way south with arrival scheduled for 4:53pm at St. Louis. Brief ceremonies were to be held at major stops along the way. On Saturday, Sept. 29 the train went on display at the St. Louis terminal for 4 morning hours, while the second train was likewise displayed to the public in Chicago, as well as on Sept. 28.

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AMTRAK-THE BIG QUESTIONS

by James Russell

FROM OUR EDITORIAL EXPERIENCE THESE ARE THE BIGGEST QUESTIONS BOTHERING AMTRAK WATCHERS. WE DON'T HAVE THE ANSWERS TO ALL OF THEM, BUT AT LEAST AIRING THE PROBLEMS MAY HELP

1) DID THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION INSTRUCT AMTRAK TO "TAKE A DIVE"?

The hardest question of all, since few have access to the high-level communications among the White House, the Dept. of Transportation, and Amtrak. This accusation was first aired in Washington at the time Amtrak appropriations bill came before the Congress in mid-1972. Senator Lowell Weicker in particular was critical of the apparent go-slow policy of Amtrak president Roger Lewis. History does take strange turns, and who is to say that ultimately Amtrak's initial measured tread will prove to be the right pace towards a genuine reversal of transportation priorities? It isn't the way we would personally have done it, but with no real precedent to guide one, it would be an easy matter to botch the job. Since Watergate, we hear increasingly the idea that with Haldeman and Ehrlichman away from the scene and with Egil Krogh out of the DOT, pressure to adhere to strict White House lines should be lessened and bolder movements could be expected of Amtrak. We simply don't know if this is true. Bolder movements may come, but they may be more the result of Amtrak learning its way around and perceiving increased support from the American public than from any change of heart on the administration's part.

2) AREN'T THE OPERATIONS AND ORGANIZATION OF AMTRAK A FOULED-UP MESS?

What large organization doesn't have problems? It's quite possible that Amtrak has more than most, but one must consider that it's trying to do something literally never before tried in the history of this planet--make a unified passenger train system run over the rails of more than a dozen American railroads that want nothing to do with passenger trains. Under these circumstances, not to mention opposition from competing transportation modes and from many officials in Washington, it would be more surprising if Amtrak's efforts ran smoothly. What most observers see are the local operations of the organization and not what happens at the head office. These local operations are indeed clearly fouled up in many cases. One would expect that the resolution of such difficulties must await Amtrak's completely taking over responsibility for running the trains and stations and other services. Most people doing the work of making the system run now exist in a limbo in which they work not for Amtrak and receive no real incentive from their railroad employers to do their job well. That so many employees work enthusiastically for helping the passenger trains is in itself gratifying.

3) ARE THE RAILROADS REALLY TRYING TO PREVENT AMTRAK FROM SUCCEEDING?

You better believe it. For some time now there has been a loud silence from the outspoken railroad managers who were so critical of Amtrak and of passenger trains when the corporation was starting out. The official stance seems to be to keep quiet about opposition to Amtrak, since all the earlier noise was proving to be counter-productive. But a leopard doesn't change its spots that easily, and you can bet your bottom dollar that the opposing roads are still doing all they can under the guise of cooperation to speed Amtrak's failure. Railroads vary, of course, in their degree of cooperation or non-cooperation, and opposition can take forms all the way from passive resistance to outright sabotage.

4) ISN'T AMTRAK LATE IN ORDERING NEW EQUIPMENT AND WON'T IT BE POOR QUALITY?

The fact that Roger Lewis has gone out of his way to explain and defend his decision to hold off so long on looking about for new passenger cars suggests that this criticism has already made itself felt around 955 L'Enfant Plaza North. But at least something has now been done. There's nothing that touches railfans in a more sen-

sitive spot than the question of equipment. After all, passenger cars constitute the real travel environment of the rail traveler, and they become connected with all the feelings about personal space and possessiveness that we apply to, say, our own living rooms. It seems unfair to prejudge the quality of the cars that Amtrak will get, since they haven't even been designed yet. Perhaps one's experience with the low quality of much of the Amtrak interior refurbishing program leads one to jump to such a conclusion. But the refurbishing program was in large part a crash program with limited funds. In ordering cars from scratch, there's no reason why Amtrak shouldn't expect to get a quality product that will wear well. With respect to the weight of the desired cars, 80,000 pounds, the argument goes, is half the weight of the average Budd-built light-weight car of the 1950s. Light weight trains of the past--the Talgo, Train X, Aerotrain, Railplanes, were failures that tended to shake themselves into scrap after only a few years of service. Railfans immediately wince at the notion of aircraft-type construction and modular design. It is argued that the flexibility of modular design, though admirable in the theoretical concept, will be both expensive and unneeded. What's more, a flexible car implies a car fleet of static size. One re-arranges passenger car configurations only when the fleet is of stable size or declining in number. Flexibility is unneeded if it means that some of the existing cars must be withdrawn and converted. What will replace the converted cars? Will Amtrak have to "discourage" a certain type of business to make way for the new? Better ride and greater protection in accidents are benefits of heavier construction. But one must face the fact that virtually nothing is constructed of material as heavy as that of the past. The basic reason is economic. If safety and comfort are not to be sacrified, modern technology will have to supply what sheer weight no longer can.

5) WON'T EUROPEAN-BUILT TRAINS SHAKE APART ON ROUGH AMERICAN TRACKS?

That remains to be seen. Again, this is a worry that cannot be resolved ahead of time. If they do, the answer, of course, is to install better track, not abandon modern equipment. The reported smooth ride of the French Turbo over the rough PC line to Chicago is encouraging. Just because European manufacture allows for closer tolerances than the relatively crude domestic product, one should not assume that it won't hold up. On the contrary, the better the build the more punishment it should be able to take. Does a Volkswagen fall apart on rough roads faster than a heavy piece of Detroit iron?

6) DOESN'T PUBLIC CRITICISM OF AMTRAK HURT THE CAUSE OF RAIL TRAVEL BY ALIENATING CONGRESS?

Nonsense. The more expressed public concern for improved rail travel the better. The record shows that Congress has consistently supported Amtrak more than the corporation itself has openly fought for public assistance. Most of the major innovations Amtrak has made have been specifically mandated by Congress. Our experience shows that letters of constructive criticism to members of Congress, far from causing them to say "let's discontinue Amtrak, it isn't working," result in a response of "let's give Amtrak more money and pass laws to let it make specific improvements." The sage advice of columnist Sylvia Porter quoted here some time ago was that now that passenger trains have been placed in the public arena--i.e., essentially nationalized--their support is up to you, working thru Congress. A word to the wise is sufficient.

7) WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP THE CAUSE OF PASSENGER TRAINS?

Many people don't like politics, and have never written their elected representatives. A painless way is to support the National Association of Railroad Passengers and let them do the "dirty work." We'll send NARP's address on request. And you can ride trains and urge others to do so. Now in the off-season you can do this more easily without alienating your friends when delays and bad equipment crop up. Off-season is a very pleasant train travel time. Amtrak has more than enough summer travelers. It can use more publicity right now.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"What's worse is the dawning possibility that BART, instead of being transit's bright future, really represents the last convulsive twitch of an outmoded concept, and that the entire costly adventure is the region's biggest disaster since the great fire."

--Dick Nolan in San Francisco Examiner, Sept. 23

"...in this McLuhanesque time, perhaps a subliminal appeal of train travel is the literally linear order it imposes on experience..."

--Wade Greene in N.Y. Times, Sept. 23

"...the 1970s may be the decade of the turbine train. In railroading, first it was steam. Then diesel and electric power dominated the rails over most of the world. Now, many enthusiasts believe, the future--at least for high-speed, medium-distance rail travel--is turbine power. Here in the U.S. two turbine trains, built by United aircraft, have been operating between Boston and New York for four years. The Canadians, too, have been experimenting with the United Aircraft trains. Specialists, however, credit the French with grabbing the lead in turbine train technology and keeping it."

--From Amtrak press release of Sept. 4

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"SAN FRANCISCO--The longest train ride in Amtrk's nationwide system is the San Francisco Zephyr between here and Chicago--2,420 miles."

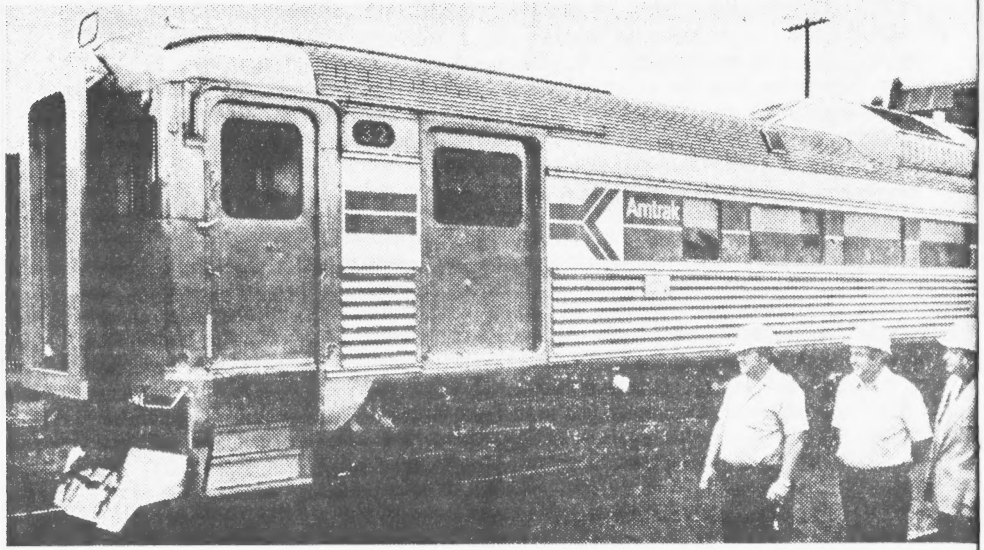
--From Amtrak press release of Sept. 6

(It feels longer when you get on that Brlington Nrthrn trck.)

"FRIDAY, September 28. Time 9:00 a.m. Event - Brief ceremony Chicago Union Station signaling beginning of service to St. Louis. Remarks by Roger Lewis and appropriate dignitaries."

--From Amtrak press release of Sept. 21

(Just ignore the remarks by the inappropriate dignitaries.)



Car 32 is the first of 6 rail diesel cars to be rebuilt for Amtrak by the Reading Co. The complete rebuilding procedure costs $140,000 per car, less than the estimated $400,000 that one would cost new. Besides new flowered upholstery and Amtrak paint, the cars get a complete mechanical reconditioning. The cars are from GN, Burlington, and New Haven. Four additional cars stored at the Reading Co. may be rebuilt into food service cars. Photo courtesy Reading (PA) Eagle.

mixed train of thoughts

NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT Union Station is threatened by demolition by the city's Redevelopment Agency, reports the NY Times. But Amtrak meanwhile has informed the mayor that it would be happy to spend money to help preserve the architecturally historic building. It's listed on the National Register of Historic Places..... AMTRAK IS SCOUTING for a site on which to relocate its Oakland, California depot. The most likely location would be south of the present station, but still close to the West Oakland rail yards. Like WP had its passenger station a few blocks from Jack London Square, an attractive and easily identifiable gathering place..... HOW TO PUT down an SP official: the neatest one yet was reported in the S.W. RR Historical Society's newsletter in June, when heated discussions were underway in Corsicana, Texas over the proposed Amtrak routing into Dallas. The SP man made a speech claiming that the line was saturated with freights, whereupon the distinguished-looking president of a leading bank there nailed him with the question, does this mean the line is so saturated that it can't accommodate one lone passenger train? When the answer was affirmative, the community leader replied, "This means you are not in a position to handle our future freight hauling needs since your facilities are full to capacity and this is a serious situation. Instead of complaining about Amtrak trains, you should be out building double tracks and installing signals so as to increase the capacity of your lines..." A few other rocks were hurled from various irate officials, and then the president of the chamber of commerce advised the shaken SP-er that they'd jolly well better let that train in or he'd see a few anti-freight train ordinances being recommended to the city.....

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AN UPDATE ON the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR, the topic of our feature article the issue before last: On Sept. 20 the westbound train struck an oil rig being hauled across the track near Gilcrest, Colorado, smashing and derailing the lead engine. There were some minor injuries to the 150 passengers on the 11-car train. Final arrival of the train next day was 8½ hours late. Otherwise #5 has had a near-perfect on-time record since Labor Day ended the summer season. When last seen the train was using only an SP snack car to feed its passengers. Jeff Pletcher corrects our consist notes in our earlier article: the DENVER ZEPHYR cars added to the SFZ are four in number, thus keeping the 18-car limit--a coach, dome coach, 10/6 sleeper, and slumbercoach. No additional dorm is added between Denver & Chicago. He also tells us that UP's steam engine 8444 ran on the eastbound SFZ from Cheyenne to Denver on Aug. 3, with return trip the 5th, for NRHS's Aug. 4 excursion. The train was well behind schedule both days, reason unknown. Finally, another small correction: the photo on page 6 of the Second August issue is of train 5, not 6..... A MONTHLY RESTAURANT review, "California Critic," in the latest issue published a glowing report on riding the DAYLIGHT/STARLIGHT from L.A. to S.F., with emphasis on the dining. They report that for $4 extra when buying tickets on the train, you can get a "Special Attention Service," which gives you a bottle of champagne, the morning paper and fresh flowers awaiting you when you board. Incidentally, bribery has been known to be used successfully on that train quite recently to get passengers into the crowded diner early..... AMTRAK ISSUED A press release this month terming the COAST DAYLIGHT/STARLIGHT the world's only "X-rated train ride," since it passes the nudist beach north of Santa Barbara. The Wall Street Journal picked up the item in its "Minor Memos" on page 1 Sept. 21..... TWO SUCCESSIVE SUNDAYS--Oct. 14 & 21--passenger service returns to an unlikely place: Western Pennsylvania's Pittsburgh & Shawmut RR. It will be steam-powered, too, with the former Reading 2102 doing the honors. The route, from Kittaning to Brockway, features tunnels & high trestles... A DIESEL EXCURSION is coming up on the Delaware & Hudson Oct. 7, between Albany & North Creek, in the heart of the Adirondacks. A dozen cars will be pulled by the D&H's rate and smoky Alco PA's.....

AMTRAK'S NEW TRAINS: The Chicago-East Dubuque train will be called the WINNEBAGO (an inappropriate name, says one commentator, since Lake Winnebago is north of Milwaukee, not near the ICG line); the new Chicago-Springfield train will be the NEW SALEM, named after the frontier town where Abraham Lincoln lived; and the Chicago-Decatur service may be called the ILLINI CANNON BALL. Amtrak has given no special names, apparently, to the French-built Turbos now running Chicago-St. Louis. Speaking of Turbos, the French product has shown fine reliability in its home country, since the RTG type trains that started running May 5 between Lyons and Strasbourg have now seen an increase to 6 roundtrips daily (effective Sept. 30) with running time on the route cut by 24 minutes. The United Aircraft Turbos, however, are likely a lost cause at this point in time. Amtrak has not yet received the additional ex-CN Turbo it was to acquire (the first one crashed and was destroyed near Montreal recently), and when it arrives it will evidently not go on a Midwestern route, but rather outfitted with third-rail capability and operated in the Northeast Corridor. In the Milwaukee-St. Louis arena, the present thru service--i.e., the ABE LINCOLN and the PRAIRIE STATE-- are being dropped but a train running Milwaukee to Chicago will be placed on the same schedule as each of them to connect in Chicago with the French Turbo runs..... SLUMBERCOACHES ARE NOW being shifted over to the Florida trains in preparation for the big winter season, coming off other trains such as the DENVER ZEPHYR. The twin-unit diners of the BROADWAY LIMITED will also see Florida service this winter. We don't know what will replace them. Incidentally, Amtrak does a big business in the Florida service in the summer too. This summer Amtrak's car rental plan for Florida travelers was so popular that the car agency ran out of automobiles and had to borrow many from Hertz, Avis, etc..... THE DETROIT TRAINS have seen ex-NYC observations join their consists recently. They have been rebuilt to coach observations with small rear lounges (no beverage service), and have new airline-type seats which first appeared in a car exhibited at Amtrak's 2nd birthday party at Chicago's Union Station..... AMTRAK'S ON-TIME PERFORMANCE in July was quite poor, with only 16.7% of long distance trains running on time. Of short-distance trains, 60.2% were on time. It was learned that in August the SP put in the worst performance of any railroad, and its lowest yet for Amtrak: only 11.9% of its trains arrived on schedule..... THE ORANGE COUNTY Transit District in California is asking Amtrak to restore an early morning commuter schedule to Los Angeles..... BART HAS ORDERED 100 new cars from Rohr as of Sept. 27, after being assured by the maker that reliability would be improved by a third..... WE REPORTED HERE last time on the old restored DENVER ZEPHYR train, now called the CIVIC PLAZA NATIONAL EXPRESS. The Kansas City-St. Louis symphony benefit run never came off, we have learned..... THE SAN DIEGANS, trains 775 and 776 on Sept. 19 and nos. 770 and 771 on the 20th were cancelled by a freight derailment near the Del Mar race track. Buses were substituted..... 10¢ PER STOPLIGHT: that's the cost of bringing an automobile to a halt, according to a General Electric man who figured out all the costs. And with the thick smog that's blanketing us right now, the cry should be: "Gentlemen, stop your engines!"..... THE MOVE OF the San Francisco SP commute station from 3rd to 4th street has been upheld by a city board. Citizens protested the move on the grounds that it would discourage commuters..... BOEING AEROSPACE COMPANY has been given approval by the Urban Mass Transportation Administration to start working on a personal-rapid-transit demonstration system at Morgantown, West Virginia... PRINCETON UNIVERSITY HAS a quaint shuttle train run by PC between Princeton and Princeton Junction, reports a reader, on the NY-Philadelphia main line. It consists of one or two MP-54 class ex-PRR "owl-eye" MU's, vintage 1920. Guess what? PC wants to discontinue the service soon..... THE BROADWAY LIMITED was seen recently by reader Henry Posner with an ex-SCL Sun Lounge, glass-roofed in its consist, as well as the observation car "Metcalf"..... THE TRUCKEE STOP of the SAN FRANCISCO ZEPHYR beginning Oct. 28 calls for a 10-min lengthening of the running time. No. 6 will stop there at 2:35pm, No. 5 at 8:22am.....

LETTERS (continued from page 2)

Lexan of the MERCHANTS?). Seriously, RTN has been the most welcome piece of mail in my box since my subscription started, probably because the news is fresh, because it comes often, and because somehow--I'm sure it's not easy--you and your staff convey a sense of hope about the passenger train in the 1970s and beyond. Many thanks for an appreciation of rail travel which I don't get anywhere else.

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Urban-Suburban Transit

NEWS OF BART: A bill was signed into law Sept. 17 that might make the BART Board of Directors elective rather than appointive. Unless a majority of county boards of supervisors object, the law will take effect. BART announced Sept. 18 that it projects a deficit beyond next summer, so that new sources of funds will have to be found or fares raised. The weekend of Sept. 15-16 BART tested a series of trains thru the tube under San Francisco Bay on automatic control, and pronounced the test highly successful, tho there are still questions about the complex switching arrangement where lines join in West Oakland. TRW Inc. of Redondo Beach, CA has received a contract to study the reliability and safety of BART trains. The new chairman of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission said late this month that if BART doesn't hurry up its debugging, San Mateo and Santa Clara counties may build systems that are not compatible with BART. Meanwhile one BART director is saying that fares should be subsidized for working class people.

THE PLAN FOR an increase in the PATH fare from 30 to 50 cents has been pronounced "dead" when the ICC indefinitely suspended hearings on the matter. PATH runs from New Jersey to New York.

WHILE GOVERNOR ROCKEFELLER'S $3.5 billion transportation bond issue coming on the N.Y. ballot in November is being criticized by business and other groups, the Governor is stirring up support for the bill by pointing out that in addition to helping mass transit and highways, it gives a provision whereby the state can rescue rail lines up for abandonment. It would also provide for development of high-speed rail passenger service on the N.Y.-Buffalo route & cut an hour off the present N.Y.-Albany schedule.

THE HEAD OF the Urban Mass Transportation Administration told Southern California this month that planners there had better not depend upon the federal government paying 80% of the estimated $6.6 billion for a rapid transit system in the Southland.

THE MONTEREY PENINSULA of California is eyeing the SP tracks and thinking of commuter trains and a bicycle path. But the SP people there came out with their bucket of cold water and at once called the plan "incompatible." SP said there would be "insurmountable problems" in mixing commuters with freight, and made other discouraging but debatable remarks. The peninsula's only bus service, incidentally, was rescued from oblivion at the last moment.

MEANWHILE, IN MASSACHUSETTS, with the collapse of the upper level of the Mystic River bridge, an important auto artery to the North Shore suburban areas, the MBTA's vintage 1924 subway cars are busier than at any time since World War II. The bridge will be out till mid-December and thus the MBTA spent much overtime getting two other antique 4-car trains running. Ridership increased on this line, the Blue Line, by 3000 daily. The old cars are used daily during rush hours, and are supplemented by newer cars built in 1951. The 1924 cars are said to be the oldest in operation on a North American subway.

RIDERSHIP ON SOME Eastern Route B&M trains climbed 30%, but with no extra equipment. Of the 84 Budd RDC's owned by B&M, only 75 are in working order. The MBTA is looking nationwide for more RDC's, and if any reader knows of some available, please inform the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority quickly.